



MK Nature Center

STREAM

The Seasonal Newsletter of the Morrison Knudsen Nature Center SPRING 2022

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Front page photos by
Brian Lawless

Images of Spring



Nature Notes

Vicky Runnoe, Conservation Education Supervisor, IDFG

For the first time in two years, the nature center's calendar is bulging with scheduled school programs. Education tables start up on weekends in April. And plans for the May 14th Pollinator Event are being finalized. Days that were previously quiet now hum with the background noise of excited voices exploring the visitor's center. It's nice to feel like we are fully back to doing what we love, helping students and visitors learn about Idaho's amazing wildlife and the landscapes those animals depend upon.

The calendar is not the only busy thing here at the nature center. Spring will also see enthusiastic groups of volunteers, working on various projects on the grounds. These volunteers help us get a lot done in a short time. We appreciate their assistance and hard work as well as the camaraderie they bring as they tackle each project.

With the completion of Fish and Game's headquarters, the season is also revealing new opportunities. The area that was once the Formal Backyard is a perfect example. We are now mulling over ideas for this area---what should it look like and how will it be used? A new pollinator garden is also in the works. The Friends of MK Nature Center will be fund-raising for this project during Idaho Gives in May. Additionally, the visitor's center is regaining its large front room with the upcoming demolition of the license sales area. These projects will take time to complete, but it is exciting that in this season of renewal, so many wonderful opportunities await.



Supporter Spotlight

Sue Dudley, Gift Shop Manager and Volunteer Coordinator, MKNC, IDFG

Hilda Packard



Hilda Packard is one of the dearest people you could ever meet, with a killer sense of humor and big smile. Hilda has quietly donated money to the Nature Center each month since 2007, and has never missed a month. That is 15 years! Every Christmas, she hand delivers chocolate treats to our staff. She often attends our volunteer potlucks. Even late into her 90's she is growing her plants, working out two times a week, and walking her dog every day.

Hilda has an amazing green thumb. You know how special it is if you have ever been on the receiving end of getting a plant that she has grown herself. *We love you Hilda* and really appreciate your support, kindness, and friendship. She is my hero and I want to be her when I grow up!

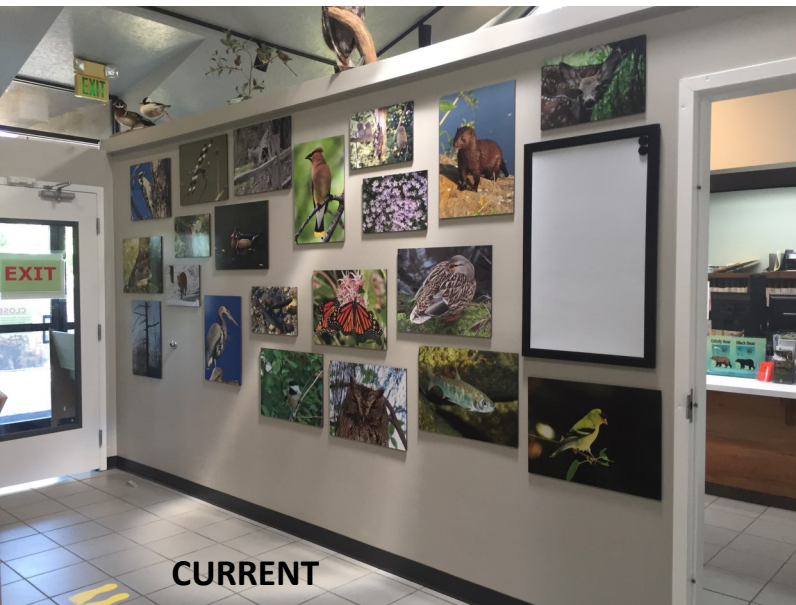
Temporary Closure for Lobby Work

Sara Focht, Wildlife Educator, MKNC, IDFG



The MK Nature Center visitor's center will be temporarily closed from April 11-May 2nd, 2022. Although we never like to be closed, we are excited to be launching into our lobby remodel. Phase one of the project happens this spring with the demolition of the partition wall and license desk that was constructed just over two years ago.

While Idaho Fish and Game Headquarters was being built, MK Nature Center hosted the license desk. We enjoyed working with the front desk staff and having license buyers at the Nature Center during that time. We are now looking forward and starting to visualize how the lobby will look for the future!



**MKNC Visitor's Center
will be closed from
April 11-May 2nd**



Welcome New Guides

Sara Focht, Wildlife Educator, MKNC, IDFG

MK Nature Center educational programs include several fun components. Inside, students usually experience audio and visuals about a nature-related theme. They get to touch pelts, horns, antlers and get their hands on real natural artifacts. Activities and crafts are also part of most programs. But the best part of every program at the MK Nature Center is the guided nature walk! Small groups are best, so MK Nature Center staff recruits, trains, and *cherishes* the volunteers who come to help guide our programs.

Guides are a special group of people. They come from different walks of life, backgrounds and hobbies, but they share a few things in common. They love kids. They are patient. And they love sharing what they know and, more importantly, their enthusiasm for nature with others.

No nature center guided walk is alike because the nature center is always changing and each visiting group is different. Program guides read their audience and adjust to their interests, abilities, and age. They deliver scientific content in fun, interactive ways, keeping everyone safe and relatively in control. Guides provide program participants with insights into the nature center that would surely be missed if they were to visit on their own. For example, nooks and crannies where animals hide...guides know where those are! Fun places to stop to see nesting geese or spawning trout...guides know where to go.

MK Nature Center took a two-year break in guiding groups due to COVID-19 but we are back and so are 34 interested volunteers! These folks have attended a guide training and will soon be shadowing veteran guides before guiding groups on their own.

We are so excited to expand our education team with these new folks and welcome back our longtime guides from the past!



Guides from the past listed clockwise starting in upper left: Tess Wolfenson, Jeremy Emerson, Jasmine Stanciu, Joyce Harvey-Morgan, Janna Gray.



Idaho Gives

Pam Bly, Board Member, FOMKNC

A sneak peek for our friends to review this year's plan to participate in Idaho Gives 2022! We recognize it is generous people like you who help improve the educational experience at the Nature Center for our community's families and children, year after year. We hope you will donate this year to Idaho Gives in supporting a new project that will be wonderful for all visitors.



Mark Your Calendar - Idaho Gives May 2-5, 2022.

2022 Projects we hope to fund:

1. The completion of the new Fish and Game headquarters presents an opportunity to establish a new pollinator garden at the MK Nature Center. This area will feature native plants beneficial to pollinators and, in turn, wildlife living at the nature center. The **new pollinator habitat** will also function as an educational display for students and visitors to learn about pollinators and how they benefit wildlife, large and small. In addition, the garden will be a model for homeowners interested in establishing beautiful native plantings to attract pollinators to their yards. Project aspects include:

Landscape design;

Purchasing plants, and landscape materials, irrigation supplies, mulch and more ...

Educational Signage

2. Help fund an AmeriCorps member to enhance and expand educational programming.

We hope that you participate in the 2022 Idaho Gives. We have been able to accomplish BIG projects with your past contributions, making the MK Nature Center a learning experience for all visitors.

[Click here on May 2nd](#)
[to donate!](#)



This area of the MK Nature Center is in the middle of the grounds, near where the long bridge meets the path to the Visitor Center. A perfect and sunny location to create a new pollinator garden. Photo by Pam Bly.

Who are pollinators?

They are the animals that pollinate over 90% of all flowering plants, and primarily include bees (native bees and honeybees), flies, butterflies, moths, and other insects, although birds, bats, and other animals can also be pollinators. Together they are an indispensable natural resource, providing one in every three bites of food we eat as well as shelter and food for most of our wildlife.



Celebrating Pollinators

PROVIDING FOOD, HABITAT & WONDER

at the

MK Nature Center

600 S. Walnut, Boise

Saturday, May 14th

10AM-3PM

\$4/person (ages 3 & up)

Family Friendly Event

Observation Hive Tours

Exploring Bee Keeping with the
Treasure Valley Bee Keepers Club

Pollinator Themed Education Booths

Activities and Crafts

Questions? Contact Sue Dudley:

sue.dudley@idfg.idaho.gov

208-287-2900



George's Fan Club

Susan Ziebarth, MKNC, IDFG

In May of 2002 we obtained a young, malnourished gopher snake that had been removed from a trail by some hikers and kept in a shoebox in their closet for a few months. They couldn't get him to eat and realizing he would die, they contacted IDFG and George Stevens, a staff biologist. George cared for the snake, got him to eat and realizing what a good temperament the little snake had asked if we could take him as an education critter. We named him George the Snake after George Stevens, the man. It is estimated George the Snake was about a year old when he came to the nature center.

George Stevens advised that we could not return the snake to the wild unless we knew exactly where he was picked up, which of course, we didn't. If he was released in unfamiliar territory, he would likely be killed by other snakes or predators.

Fast forward 20 years and George the Snake has a following and a fan club. He has been admired (and sometimes feared) by thousands of visitors.

In his time here he has "gone missing" and had some mishaps, but has always come out of them unscathed. To name a few, he got caught in the rollers of a printer and had to be rolled forward through the paper feed; he crawled inside a drinking fountain that had to be dismantled to retrieve him; and he got caught in a spider glue trap and wrapped through it two full wraps.

His biggest adventure was when he crawled under the Wildlife Room display and was gone for four months. Since George goes without eating for months at a time, we weren't worried about him starving. We left him a bowl of water and a heating pad near the entrance. One morning, there he was, coiled up below the elk. A young man and his Dad saw George moving and knew he wasn't one of the taxidermies!

Last December, we began to see trails of blood in his cage with what appeared to be a prolapsed intestine, similar to a hemorrhoid. We took him to Idaho Veterinary Clinic in Nampa and ruled out any type of "heroic" surgery because of his age. We kept him extra hydrated, but the bleeding and prolapses continued to happen with each bowel movement.

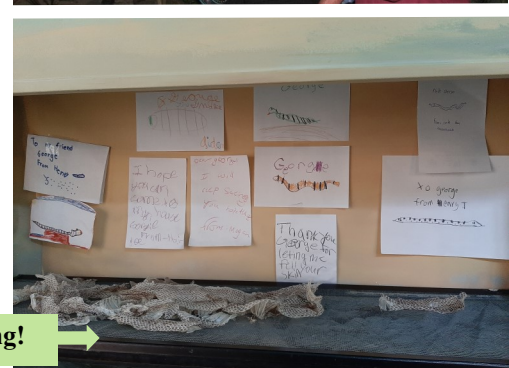
After a month of antibiotics, baths, and food his condition cleared up. January 27 was a big day, probably the turning point—he pooped with no blood; molted and shed a stuck eye cap; had a drink of water and a mouse for lunch; and received one of his last antibiotic shots. What a day!

George's fan club includes the Nature Center staff. We are all so glad he rallied and the rest of his fan club will be happy he is healthy.

[Click this picture to watch a 1 minute video of George molting!](#)

[Click this picture to watch a 1 minute video about George!](#)

Top photo: Susan Ziebarth holding George out for students to gently touch. Susan is the President of George's fan club. Second photo: George, really? A printer? Third photo: Here is the young man who found George in the Wildlife Room after his big escape. Fourth photo: George's fan club mail. Bottom: George eats! Photos by Susan Ziebarth.



Volunteer Highlight

Susan Ziebarth, MKNC, IDFG

Debbie is a retired veterinarian and has been a friend of the Nature Center for years. She had a mobile vet clinic “Menagerie” in the Valley in 2000; she was the lead Vet at ZooBoise; belongs to the Idaho Herpetological Society; is an Idaho Master Naturalist; and is a member of the Idaho Native Plant Society. Debbie also has a history with our education snakes.

In June, 2005, our female Gopher Snake, Lucky, developed a large bulge on her side. Debbie volunteered her services, diagnosed it as a kidney tumor and performed kidney removal surgery. She taught me how to perform post-op care and give injections of antibiotics. Yikes! Lucky survived another few months, but developed another tumor on her remaining kidney and passed away. She is buried on the Nature Center grounds under a native shrub.

When George got ill this winter, I naturally turned to Debbie for help and advice. She recommended which vets to call, consulted on likely outcomes and treatments. Her keen, experienced eye noticed a discoloration of his underside scales near the cloaca and determined it looked like an infection. That’s when we decided the antibiotic therapy and hydration were the way to go. She came in every 3 days for a month to give him his antibiotic injections, check on his well-being and communicate with nature center staff.

Debbie has come to the rescue of our two snakes, almost two decades apart. Thanks so much Dr. Wiggins!

Dr. Debbie Wiggins DVM



Dr. Debbie Wiggins (left) gives George his antibiotic injection. MKNC AmeriCorps Member, Mariah Hilliard, assists. Photo by MKNC.

It Takes a Village!



Dr. Jennifer Hacker (left) and Vet Tech, Chase (right) were part of the team who helped us diagnose and care for George over the winter.

Idaho Veterinary Hospital in Nampa also helped with George’s health adventure this year. Thanks to Dr. Jennifer Hacker and Chase (Vet Tech), George was a pretty good sport about being extensively examined, but it was easy to tell when he had enough. Dr. Hacker and Chase were kind, gentle but firm and very skilled. Dr. Hacker continually followed up with me about George’s recovery and was very helpful in making good choices about his care. George was very comfortable during his care. Thank you for taking care of your rather unusual patient!



Spring Garden Workday



Susan Floriana Riley, Sonya Fiebert, Bonnie Urresti, Nan McGraft, Benita Putzier, Sonya Janson, Jon Mathews, Katie Sheppa, Susan King, Gail Nottingham, Jan Egge, David Brownell and Karen McLaughlin.

April 5, 2022



THANK YOU
Volunteers and
Staff!



2022 Idaho Native Plant Sale

Plant lists and ordering starts online April 22nd

Pick up at MK Nature Center

April 23-25 (as supplies last)



[Watch the INPS website under “Pahove Chapter”](#) tab for detailed availability list

and ordering instructions on April 22nd . Nursery License #00T0016

DONORS

Erin Mercer
Hilda Packard
James McCallum
MK Foundation
Reed Lindsay
Scott & Susan Prestel
Susan Riley
Willow Hahn

January
February
March

VOLUNTEERS

Michele Andrew
Pam Bly
Lori Chacartegui
Patrice Davies
Brent Davy
Louis DeWitt
Kevin Drews
Danae Fails
Michael Frith
Michael Garrett
Elizabeth Grosse
Marylee Hale
Linda Jarsky
Carolyn King
Sandy Kurka
Randy Langseth
Jon Mathews
Terri Muse
Bronwyn Myers
Katherine Powell
Barb Recla
Howard Sheppa
Patrick Stoll
Sandra Sweet
Clare Veseth
Roger Wallace
Debbie Wiggins
Kevin Wilson
Julia Zarbnisky

Welcome Aboard, Gaby!



Hi, my name is Gaby Woodard and I am so excited to be working at the MK Nature Center. I studied Marine Biology and Earth Science at UC Santa Cruz then went on to work as a hydrologist for Trout Unlimited. In my spare time I love photography, cooking, and spending time outdoors with my husband and our dog, Rollie. I am looking forward to learning more about Idaho's amazing wildlife and to have a part in inspiring the next generation of conservationists.

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